Kantian Review, 22, 2, 305–329 © Kantian Review, 2017
doi:10.1017/S1369415417000061

Kant on God's Intuitive Understanding: Interpreting *CJ* §76's Modal Claims

REED WINEGAR
Fordham University
E-mail: bwinegar@fordham.edu

Abstract
In §76 of the third *Critique*, Kant claims that an intuitive understanding would represent no distinction between possible and actual things. Prior interpretations of §76 take Kant to claim that an intuitive understanding would produce things merely in virtue of thinking about them and, thus, could not think of merely possible things. In contrast, I argue that §76's modal claims hinge on Kant's suggestion that God represents things in their thoroughgoing determination, including in their connection to God's actual will. I conclude by using my interpretation to argue that §76's modal claims do not entail Spinozism.

Keywords: Baumgarten, God, intuitive understanding, modality, Spinoza

1. Introduction

In §76 of the *Critique of the Power of Judgement*, Kant contrasts the human being's discursive understanding with the concept of an intuitive understanding and provocatively claims that an intuitive understanding would represent no distinction between possible things and actual things.[1] Kant writes:

> I cannot presuppose that in every such being thinking and intuiting, hence the possibility and the actuality of things, are two different conditions for the exercise of its cognitive faculties. For an understanding to which this distinction did not apply, all objects that I cognize would *be* (exist), and the possibility of some that did not exist, i.e., their contingency if they did exist, as well as the necessity that is to be distinguished from that, would not enter into the representation of such a being at all. (*CJ*, 5: 402–3)

Downloaded from https://www.cambridge.org/core. Cornell University Library, on 08 May 2017 at 16:32:16, subject to the Cambridge Core terms of use, available at https://www.cambridge.org/core/terms.
https://doi.org/10.1017/S1369415417000061

Prior interpretations typically take §76 to claim that an intuitive understanding could not think of merely possible things because it would automatically produce things merely in virtue of thinking about them.[2] However, various commentators have suggested that this common interpretation entails a Spinozistic metaphysics that leaves room for neither God's freedom nor God's realization of the highest good.[3] Such Spinozistic consequences would be troubling. After all, Kant routinely assigns an intuitive understanding to God.[4] If Kant's theory of intuitive understanding conflicted with his moral concept of God, then his views regarding God would be inconsistent. Given the emphasis that all three of Kant's *Critiques* place on his theory of morally justified belief (*Glaube*) in God, this inconsistency would pose a major problem for Kant's Critical philosophy.[5]

In this essay, I will argue that the common interpretation of §76's modal claims is mistaken. In contrast to the common interpretation, I will argue that §76's modal claims should be interpreted in terms of Kant's views regarding thoroughgoing determination. As I will show, Kant's *Nachlaß* develops the argument underlying §76's modal claims as a criticism of Baumgarten's *Metaphysics*, which Kant used as a textbook for his lectures on metaphysics and rational theology.[6] According to Kant, Baumgarten's distinction between God's knowledge of possible and actual things contradicts the claim that God's intuitive understanding cognizes things in their thoroughgoing determination and does not abstract from the particular determinations of things.[7] I will show that this appeal to God's intuitive cognition of things in their thoroughgoing determination explains §76's modal claims that an intuitive understanding would not represent any merely possible things, would not represent any actual things as contingent, and (although the point is often overlooked) would not represent any actual things as necessary. Moreover, I will show that this emphasis on God's cognition of thoroughgoing determination reveals that God's will, rather than merely God's understanding, plays a significant role in §76's underlying argument, and I will argue that attending to the relationship between §76's underlying argument and Kant's views regarding the divine will promises to reconcile §76's modal claims with Kant's moral concept of God.

My discussion will proceed as follows. In section 2, I will outline Baumgarten's concept of intuitive understanding. In section 3, I will examine Kant's reaction to Baumgarten's ascription of an intuitive understanding to God. In section 4, I will use Kant's criticisms of Baumgarten to

Downloaded from https://www.cambridge.org/core. Cornell University Library, on 08 May 2017 at 16:32:16, subject to the Cambridge Core terms of use, available at https://www.cambridge.org/core/terms.
https://doi.org/10.1017/S1369415417000061

illustrate §76's underlying argument. Finally, in section 5 I will argue that §76's modal claims do not conflict with Kant's moral God.

2. Baumgarten's Concept of Intuitive Understanding

Baumgarten's characterization of intuitive understanding descends from Leibniz and Wolff; I begin, then, by briefly presenting their views.[8] In *Meditations on Cognition, Truth, and Ideas*, Leibniz identifies the highest form of cognition as clear, distinct, adequate and intuitive:

> Thus, cognition (*cognitio*) is either obscure or *clear*, and again, clear cognition is either confused or *distinct*, and distinct cognition either inadequate or *adequate*, and adequate cognition either symbolic or *intuitive*: and, indeed, if cognition were, at the same time, both adequate and intuitive, it would be absolutely perfect. (Leibniz 1989: 23 [1999: 585]; translation altered)[9]

This passage divides the intellect's clear and distinct cognitions into adequate and inadequate cognitions. An adequate cognition requires that 'analysis has been carried to completion' (Leibniz 1989: 24 [1999: 587]). For instance, an adequate cognition of gold requires that the component marks of gold (such as its colour, weight, etc.) be analysed into their component marks until one reaches primitive marks. Leibniz further divides adequate cognitions into blind or symbolic cognitions and intuitive cognitions. Blind or symbolic cognitions are cognitions that employ signs in place of collections of marks:

> we don't usually grasp the entirety of a thing all at once, especially in a more lengthy analysis, but in place of the things themselves we make use of signs … I usually call such cognition (*cognitionem*), which is found both in algebra and arithmetic and, indeed, almost everywhere, *blind* or *symbolic*. (Leibniz 1989: 24–5 [1999: 587–8]; translation altered)

Here Leibniz notes that a human being cannot distinctly represent all of the marks contained in a complex cognition simultaneously; therefore, human beings often employ signs in place of collections of marks. In contrast to a blind or symbolic cognition, an intuitive cognition distinctly represents all of a cognition's component marks simultaneously. As Leibniz writes, 'And indeed when a notion is very complex, we cannot consider all of its component notions at the same time. When we can, or indeed insofar as we can, I call cognition (*cognitionem*) *intuitive*' (Leibniz 1989: 25 [1999: 588]; translation altered). Although Leibniz uses the

Downloaded from https://www.cambridge.org/core. Cornell University Library, on 08 May 2017 at 16:32:16, subject to the Cambridge Core terms of use, available at https://www.cambridge.org/core/terms.
https://doi.org/10.1017/S1369415417000061

visual terms 'blind' and 'intuitive' here, we should note that in *Meditations on Cognition, Truth, and Ideas* Leibniz's intuitive cognition and blind or symbolic cognition are both species of intellectual cognition.[10]

Because Leibniz doubts that finite human minds can analyse all of the component marks in a complex cognition, much less distinctly represent all of those component marks simultaneously, Leibniz doubts that humans could ever possess a complex but fully intuitive cognition (Leibniz 1989: 24 [1999: 587]). But because God's understanding clearly and distinctly represents all of a thing's component marks in a single stroke of the mind, Leibniz maintains that God's understanding is fully intuitive. Furthermore, Leibniz's God distinctly and simultaneously represents all of the component marks in every complete individual concept, including those of possible but non-actual things. Thus Leibniz's God intuitively cognizes both actual and merely possible things.

Wolff preserves Leibniz's definition of understanding in terms of distinct representations and, like Leibniz, distinguishes intuitive cognitions from cognitions that use signs (Wolff 1983: §277). Wolff writes:

> we either represent the thing itself or represent it through words or other signs. For example, if I think about a person who is absent and his image hovers as it were before my eyes; then I represent his person itself. But if regarding virtue I think these words: It is a capacity to direct his actions according to the law of nature; then I represent virtue to myself through words. The first cognition is named *intuitive cognition*; the other is *figurative cognition*. (Wolff 1983: §316)

Here Wolff contrasts an image of an absent person, which employs no signs, with a cognition of virtue, which employs words as signs. Wolff refers to the image of an absent person as an intuitive cognition and to the cognition of virtue as figurative. Although Leibniz's essay classifies intuitive cognition as a species of intellectual cognition, Wolff classifies as intuitive any cognition that does not use signs, including sensible cognition. Indeed, Wolff's paradigm of an intuitive cognition – the image of an absent person – is a sensible cognition.[11]

However, Wolff does not classify all intuitive cognitions as sensible cognitions. Rather, (like Leibniz) Wolff claims that God's intellectual cognition is intuitive. Because God represents all things distinctly, God's power of cognition qualifies as understanding. And because God

Downloaded from https://www.cambridge.org/core. Cornell University Library, on 08 May 2017 at 16:32:16, subject to the Cambridge Core terms of use, available at https://www.cambridge.org/core/terms.
https://doi.org/10.1017/S1369415417000061

distinctly represents all of the component marks of all things in a single stroke of the mind, God's understanding does not rely on signs as placeholders for collections of marks; thus God's understanding is intuitive. As Wolff writes, 'And in such a manner, because he [i.e. God] cognizes everything not only distinctly and to its most inner (§962) but also at once (§955), he has an intuitive cognition of all things (§316)' (Wolff 1983: §963).[12] For the purposes of comparing §76's modal claims to the pre-Critical tradition, we should highlight that Wolff's term 'thing' (*Ding*) refers here, as it does throughout the *German Metaphysics*, to any possible thing, rather than primarily to actual things. Thus Wolff (like Leibniz) attributes to God an intuitive cognition of all possible things and does not limit God's intuitive cognition to actual things.

In the *Metaphysics*, Baumgarten similarly distinguishes between intuitive cognitions and symbolic cognitions in terms of signs:

> If the sign is joined together in a perception with the signified, this is called SYMBOLIC KNOWLEDGE. If the perception of the signified is greater than the perception of signs, the KNOWLEDGE will be INTUITIVE (intuited). (Baumgarten 2013: §620)

Unlike his predecessors, Baumgarten states that a case of human cognition can contain both perceptions of signs and perceptions of the thing signified.[13] Unfortunately, Baumgarten does not illustrate this claim. But his suggestion appears to be that one can simultaneously perceive both an object and words that apply to the object. To the extent that the perception of signs is greater than the perception of the thing signified, the cognition is symbolic; to the extent that the perception of the signified is greater than the perception of signs, the cognition is intuitive.

Like Leibniz and Wolff, Baumgarten attributes an intuitive understanding to God. According to Baumgarten, God represents all of the component marks of all things in a single stroke of the mind and, thus, represents all things distinctly and with maximal clarity. Because God represents all things distinctly and with maximal clarity, God's cognition qualifies as understanding. Moreover, because God cognizes all the marks of all things, God's cognition does not rely on signs as placeholders. Consequently, God's understanding is intuitive. Baumgarten writes, 'Since God knows all signified things most distinctly, he has an intuition of all things (§620, 864)' (Baumgarten 2013: §871). We should, however, note that Baumgarten continues as follows: 'He [i.e. God] also

Downloaded from https://www.cambridge.org/core. Cornell University Library, on 08 May 2017 at 16:32:16, subject to the Cambridge Core terms of use, available at https://www.cambridge.org/core/terms.
https://doi.org/10.1017/S1369415417000061

knows all signs, and all the symbolic knowledge of the souls in the world (§864, 869). However, in him the perception of signs is never greater or less than the perception of the signified (§870); both are always the greatest (§864)' (Baumgarten 2013: §871). Baumgarten's claim here that God's cognition of signs is *neither* greater *nor* less than God's cognition of the signified might raise a quibble because he defines an intuitive cognition as one in which the perceptions of the signified are *greater* than the perceptions of signs. Baumgarten does not address this tension. But his disciple Meier clarifies that classifying cognition as symbolic connotes that the cognizer relies on the perceptions of signs. Although God cognizes all signs by knowing people's souls, God does not rely on signs as humans do; thus we should label God's understanding intuitive (Meier 1755–9: §894).

Like Leibniz and Wolff, Baumgarten claims that God possesses an intuitive cognition of all possible things and does not limit God's intuitive cognition to actual things. In fact, Baumgarten further refines his characterization of God's intuitive understanding by drawing several distinctions regarding God's cognition of both actual and possible things. More specifically, he refers to God's intuitive cognition of possible things as God's knowledge of simple intelligence: 'God knows (§873) (I) all determinations of all things, insofar as these are considered as merely possible. This is the KNOWLEDGE <*SCIENTIA*> OF SIMPLE INTELLIGENCE' (Baumgarten 2013: §874). But because Baumgarten takes the actuality of created things to depend on the divine will, he refers to God's intuitive cognition of actual created things as God's free knowledge: 'God knows (§873) (II) all the determinations of the actual beings (1) of this world, which is FREE KNOWLEDGE (of vision)' (Baumgarten 2013: §875). And Baumgarten further divides God's free knowledge into three subcategories: (1) God's divine recollection (that is, God's cognition of the actual past), (2) God's knowledge of vision (that is, God's cognition of the actual present), and (3) God's foreknowledge (that is, God's cognition of the actual future) (Baumgarten 2013: §875). Finally, Baumgarten notes that God's intuitive understanding possesses middle knowledge, which he identifies as knowledge of the determinations of things in other possible worlds (Baumgarten 2013: §876). Again, regarding our upcoming discussion of Kant, the important point to emphasize is that Baumgarten's concept of God's intuitive understanding encompasses God's knowledge of simple intelligence, God's free knowledge (including God's recollection, vision and foreknowledge) and God's middle knowledge; thus Baumgarten ascribes to God's intuitive understanding cognition of both the merely possible and the actual.

Downloaded from https://www.cambridge.org/core. Cornell University Library, on 08 May 2017 at 16:32:16, subject to the Cambridge Core terms of use, available at https://www.cambridge.org/core/terms.
https://doi.org/10.1017/S1369415417000061

3. Kant's Reaction to Baumgarten's Concept of Intuitive Understanding

As we have seen, Leibniz, Wolff and Baumgarten claim that God intuitively cognizes both possible things and actual things. Why, then, does Kant controversially claim in §76 that an intuitive understanding would represent no distinction between possible things and actual things? Moreover, why does Kant claim in §76 that an intuitive understanding would represent things neither as contingent nor as necessary, as he does when he notes, 'their contingency … as well as the necessity that is to be distinguished from that, would not enter into the representation of such a being at all' (*CJ*, 5: 403)? Initially, one might be tempted to answer these questions by suggesting that Kant uses the phrase 'intuitive understanding' differently than Leibniz, Wolff and Baumgarten. These all claim that God's understanding is intuitive because it does not rely on signs. But Kant often uses the term 'intuition' (*Anschauung*) for a representation in which an object is given. Perhaps, for Kant, an intuitive understanding is an understanding to which things are inevitably available. Kant might seem to suggest this interpretation in §76, when he writes:

> For if two heterogeneous elements were not required for the exercise of these faculties, understanding for concepts and sensible intuition for objects corresponding to them, then there would be no distinction (between the possible and the actual). That is, if our understanding were intuitive, it would have no objects except what is actual. (CJ, 5: 401–2)

This passage might seem to characterize an intuitive understanding as one that does not rely on sensibility but, rather, supplies its own objects by creating objects in the mere act of thinking about them. Jessica Leech, Beth Lord and John Zammito have all recently endorsed such an interpretation of §76. Leech claims, '*intuitive understanding* is a capacity for thought which can provide its own intuitions' (2014: 346–7; emphasis in original).[14] Lord writes, 'Its [i.e. an intuitive understanding's] objects, things in themselves, are actualized in the act of being thought' (2011: 98). And Zammito says, 'For that [intuitive] intellect, to think *was* to actualize' (1992: 257; emphasis in original). According to this common interpretation, God's understanding would automatically actualize an object merely by thinking about it. Thus God's intuitive understanding could not represent any merely possible object; rather, in the act of representing an object as possible, God would actualize the object. Moreover, because God cannot represent an object as possible without

Downloaded from https://www.cambridge.org/core. Cornell University Library, on 08 May 2017 at 16:32:16, subject to the Cambridge Core terms of use, available at https://www.cambridge.org/core/terms.
https://doi.org/10.1017/S1369415417000061

representing it as actual, God cannot represent the non-existence of any actual object and, thus, cannot represent any actual object as contingent. And perhaps Leech, Lord and Zammito believe that this interpretation could also explain why Kant claims that God's intuitive understanding does not represent objects as necessary (although they do not clearly address this aspect of §76).

However, I do not think that this common interpretation of §76 is right. The common interpretation of §76 claims that God's intuitive understanding automatically creates things merely by thinking about them. But this is a surprising suggestion. The Leibnizian tradition typically maintains that God's will (rather than merely God's understanding) determines which things are actualized.[15] And Kant (who ascribes a holy will to God) agrees that we should think of God as creating through his will.[16] For this reason, we should prefer an interpretation of §76 that explains the role of God's will (rather than merely God's understanding) in creation. But the common interpretation of §76 does not do this. Furthermore, contrary to the common interpretation, the detailed discussions of intuitive understanding in the transcripts of Kant's lectures illustrate that Kant agrees with Baumgarten's basic characterization of divine intuition. Like Baumgarten, Kant describes an intuitive understanding as an understanding that cognizes all things in a single stroke of the mind. For example, the *Danziger Rationaltheologie* states:[17]

> He [i.e. God] has an intuitive understanding. Our understanding is discursive, that is, we cognize the things through general marks, which we determine one after the other, such that they designate an individual. But in that case I cognize the things merely successively and not at once. But these are obviously deficiencies: therefore God cannot have a human understanding. He must have an understanding that represents the things at once, intuits them so to say. (Th-Baumbach, 28: 1267; cf. R 4270, 17: 489 [1769–76] and Th-Pölitz, 28: 1051)

Here Kant happily accepts Baumgarten's conception of intuitive understanding as an understanding that cognizes all of the determinations of all things in a single cognition. Of course, one might worry that Kant is merely explaining Baumgarten's concept of intuitive understanding for his students. But Kant's lectures criticize many aspects of Baumgarten's conception of God's understanding. Thus the decision to repeat Baumgarten's conception of God's intuition signals Kant's agreement. Kant further expresses this agreement in §77 of the third *Critique*, where

Downloaded from https://www.cambridge.org/core. Cornell University Library, on 08 May 2017 at 16:32:16, subject to the Cambridge Core terms of use, available at https://www.cambridge.org/core/terms.
https://doi.org/10.1017/S1369415417000061

he refers to an intuitive understanding as a power of cognition that goes 'from the *synthetically universal* (of the intuition of a whole as such) to the particular' (*CJ*, 5: 407). Here, the third *Critique* refers to intuitive understanding as an intellectual cognition of the whole that includes cognition of all the parts. Once again, Kant's description of the *intuitive* character of God's understanding agrees with Baumgarten's characterization of God's intuition.[18]

However, despite Kant's agreement with Baumgarten about the intuitive character of God's cognition, we need to acknowledge that Kant objects to Baumgarten's *rationale* for classifying God's intuitive cognition as *understanding*. According to Baumgarten, God's cognition is intellectual because God represents all things distinctly. But Kant famously rejects Baumgarten's definition of understanding. According to Kant, concepts and sensible intuitions do not differ merely in terms of clarity and distinctness. Instead, understanding and sensibility are different in kind. Kant's lectures level this thesis against Baumgarten's rationale for ascribing an understanding to God: 'I cannot attribute an understanding to God, because he has the most distinct concepts, but because he has no sensible representations (sensibility does not accord with the concept of an *entis originarii*)' (Th-Baumbach, 28: 1266; cf. Th-Pölitz, 28: 1051). Because Kant rejects Baumgarten's rationale for attributing understanding to God, he must provide a new one. To this end, Kant claims that any non-sensible faculty of cognition is (by definition) an understanding, and because God's impassibility entails that God's cognition is non-sensible, God's faculty of cognition is (by definition) an understanding.[19] As Kant remarks, 'God's cognition is not sensible, which contradicts the concept of the *entis originarii*. In general, we name understanding that which is not sensible. Thus, God has understanding' (Th-Baumbach, 28: 1267). Granted, Kant's definition of understanding in this passage as any non-sensible power of cognition might initially seem puzzling. The first *Critique* describes the understanding not merely as a spontaneous faculty but more specifically as a spontaneous faculty *of general concepts or rules*. Thus one might try to dismiss the lectures' claim that *any* non-sensible power of cognition is an understanding. But, once again, this claim is not limited to the lectures. Rather, Kant makes the same point in §77 of the third *Critique*, when he writes, 'a faculty of a *complete spontaneity of intuition* would be a cognitive faculty distinct and completely independent from sensibility, and thus an understanding in the most general sense of the term' (*CJ*, 5: 406). And the Jäsche Logic also claims that we can define understanding as simply 'a faculty of *spontaneity*' (9: 36).

Downloaded from https://www.cambridge.org/core. Cornell University Library, on 08 May 2017 at 16:32:16, subject to the Cambridge Core terms of use, available at https://www.cambridge.org/core/terms.
https://doi.org/10.1017/S1369415417000061

As one might suspect, the first *Critique* refers to the understanding as a faculty of general concepts or rules to characterize human understanding. According to Kant, human understanding employs general concepts, but God's understanding does not. A long but important passage from the *Metaphysik L1* transcript (dated to the mid-1770s) clearly makes this point:

> The originality of the *intellectus originarii* is that it cognizes all parts from the whole and not the whole from the parts, because it cognizes everything and determines *limitando* all things. The cognitions of the *intellectus originarii* are not concepts, but *Ideas*. Concepts are general discursive representations and general marks of things. Abstraction is required for all concepts, but that is a deficiency; we limit our representation, and thereby we receive clear concepts and representations. But because the *intellectus originarius* is unlimited, it cannot be based on limitation and abstraction. Because human understanding cognizes something by means of general marks, brings it under concepts, and cognizes by means of a rule, the human understanding is discursive, but the *intellectus originarius* is intuitive. It does not cognize *per conceptus* but *per intuitus*. Because the original understanding is not bound to limits but discursive cognition is a limitation, the divine cognition is an *immediate* cognition. The original understanding is thus intuitive. (Met-L1/Pölitz, 28: 328–9; cf. R 6041, 18: 431 [1783–4], Th-Pölitz, 28: 1053, Th-Baumbach, 18: 1267)

As this passage explains, human beings possess general concepts, which (by definition) omit particular determinations of individuals. But God's understanding cognizes all things in a single stroke of the mind and does not abstract from the particular determinations of individuals. According to Kant, abstraction is not an ability but, instead, a limitation not befitting God's perfect understanding. Here Kant agrees with Baumgarten, who also acknowledges that God's understanding does not abstract (Baumgarten 2013: §870). Thus God's understanding does not employ general concepts. Kant marks this difference between human understanding and God's understanding by referring in the quoted passage to God's cognitions as Ideas, rather than concepts.[20]

It is important to stress that Kant's disagreement with Baumgarten over the definition of *understanding* commits him to the claim that God cognizes actual finite things because God is their creator. According to

Downloaded from https://www.cambridge.org/core. Cornell University Library, on 08 May 2017 at 16:32:16, subject to the Cambridge Core terms of use, available at https://www.cambridge.org/core/terms.
https://doi.org/10.1017/S1369415417000061

Kant, understanding is a faculty of spontaneity and, thus, not receptive. Consequently, God cognizes created things by cognizing himself as their creator (cf. Th-Pölitz, 28: 1054, Th-Baumbach, 28: 1270, and R 5535, 18: 211 [1772–8]). According to Kant, we should represent God's will as the ground of all actual created things (Th-Pölitz, 28: 1092–3, Th-Baumbach, 28: 1297ff.). Through cognizing his own will, God cognizes in full detail all of the things that he has willed to create. Note that this aspect of Kant's view does not entail the faulty interpretation that God's understanding automatically produces a thing merely by thinking about it. Instead, God produces things through his will. Nevertheless, the fact that God creates things through his will explains how God cognizes actual created things.

As we have seen, Kant's *Nachlaß* presents significant evidence against the common interpretation of §76, according to which God's understanding automatically produces things merely in virtue of thinking about them. Yet, one might reply that other textual evidence still seems to favour the common interpretation. For example, in the first *Critique* Kant writes:

> For if I wanted to think of an understanding that itself intuited (as, say, a divine understanding, which would not represent given objects, but through whose representation the objects would themselves at the same time (*zugleich*) be given or produced), then the categories would have no significance at all with regard to such a cognition. (B145)

The phrase 'through whose representation the objects would themselves at the same time be given or produced' might seem to indicate that God's understanding automatically creates objects in virtue of thinking about them.

However, the passage's claim that objects are produced through God's representations is consistent with my own, alternative interpretation. For Kant, both God's will and God's representations play roles in creation. We can explain these two aspects of creation as follows. In the first *Critique*, Kant claims that reason prompts us to think of God as the highest reality from which the reality of finite things is derived: 'All manifoldness of things is only so many different ways of limiting the concept of the highest reality, which is their common substratum' (A578/B606). Note, Kant denies that finite things are limitations of God himself (A579/B607). Rather, Kant's claim is that (according to reason) finite things, though distinct from God, derive their own limited reality from

Downloaded from https://www.cambridge.org/core. Cornell University Library, on 08 May 2017 at 16:32:16, subject to the Cambridge Core terms of use, available at https://www.cambridge.org/core/terms.
https://doi.org/10.1017/S1369415417000061

God's highest reality.[21] Now God's will creates by actualizing a particular finite thing whose reality derives from a portion of God's highest reality. By cognizing the entirety of his own highest reality, God also cognizes the portion of his highest reality that grounds a particular finite thing's limited reality. As the *Religionslehre* states, 'We represent to ourselves, namely, that in cognizing his own essence (*simplex intelligentiae*) God must also cognize everything possible, since he is the ground of all possibilities' (Th-Pöltiz 28: 1053). Thus God's understanding cognizes a portion of his own highest reality, and God's will creates a finite thing that corresponds to this representation. Because God's will creates a thing that corresponds to God's representation of a portion of his own highest reality, God's will creates objects 'through [God's] representation' (B145).

One might try to resist my proposal on two grounds. First, the B145 passage does not explicitly mention God's will. However, I contend that B145 is simply elliptical. Kant's audience would have traditionally associated God's creation with God's will; thus Kant did not need to mention it here. Indeed, if Kant had intended to reject the traditional view that creation depends on God's will, then we might expect him to carefully explain and defend this point. But he never does this. Instead, he normally voices the traditional view that creation depends on God's will.

Second, one might argue that the phrase 'at the same time' (*zugleich*) indicates that God's representations *automatically* produce their objects. This would suggest that God's understanding automatically creates things merely by thinking about them. But this interpretation is not mandatory. After all, it can be the case that two things always happen together even though one does not automatically create the other. Thus Kant's point may simply be that the divine will's creation of things happens 'at the same time' as the divine understanding's representation of those things. Indeed, given that Kant's God is not temporal, the phrase 'at the same time' (*zugleich*) might indicate that all of God's activities belong to a single atemporal, eternal 'moment' such that the divine will's creation of objects through God's representations is 'simultaneous' with God's possession of those representations. But, obviously, to say that God's will creates 'at the same time' as God's understanding represents does not entail that God's understanding automatically produces things merely in virtue of thinking about them.

4. Intuitive Understanding and Modality

With this background in place, let us turn now to §76's modal claims. As noted previously, §76 claims that an intuitive understanding would

Downloaded from https://www.cambridge.org/core. Cornell University Library, on 08 May 2017 at 16:32:16, subject to the Cambridge Core terms of use, available at https://www.cambridge.org/core/terms.
https://doi.org/10.1017/S1369415417000061

represent no distinction between possible things and actual things and also claims that an intuitive understanding would represent things as neither contingent nor necessary. Unfortunately, Kant does not pause in the third *Critique* to explain these claims in detail. However, as I will illustrate, the *Nachlaß*'s criticisms of Baumgarten's distinction between God's knowledge of possible things and God's knowledge of actual things clarify the rationale behind them.

Yet, before examining these criticisms, we need to dispel a potential worry about the *Nachlaß*'s relevance to §76. Much of the *Nachlaß* material that we are considering regards God. Although many commentators discuss §76 in terms of divine understanding, some have questioned whether the intuitive understanding of §§76–7 is divine.[22] Indeed, Kant does not use the term 'God' (*Gott*) anywhere in §§76–7. But if the intuitive understanding of §§76–7 is not divine, one might question using the *Nachlaß*'s discussions of God to help interpret §76.

There are, however, decisive reasons to claim that §§76–7 concern God. In §77 Kant refers to the intuitive understanding under discussion as an 'intuitive (archetypical)' - *intuitiven* (*urbildlichen*) - understanding and as an '*intellectus archetypus*' (*CJ*, 5: 407–8). Elsewhere, Kant defines an archetypical understanding as an understanding whose intuitions are the grounds of things and, consequently, identifies an archetypical understanding with the Creator's understanding. For example, in his 1772 letter to Herz, Kant defines an *intellectus archetypus* as 'an intellect whose intuition is itself the ground of things' and explicitly identifies an *intellectus archetypus* with God as creator (Corr, 10: 130). And in *Reflexion* 6041 Kant again identifies an *intellectus archetypus* with a creator's mind: 'His [i.e. God's] cognitions are … ideas, which do not presuppose the things, but make them possible. *intellectus archetypus*' (R 6041, 18: 431 [1783–4, emphasis in original]; cf. R 4345, 17: 514 [1766–75] and R 4348 n., 17: 515 [1770–8]). Consequently, Kant's identification of §§76–7's intuitive understanding with an archetypical understanding entails that those sections' intuitive understanding belongs to God as the creator of things.

Additionally, Kant has good reason to doubt the possibility of any non-divine intuitive understanding. As we have seen, an intuitive understanding must be spontaneous, rather than sensible, to qualify as an understanding. Thus no aspect of an intuitive understanding's representation can stem from sensibility. However, if an intuitive understanding is neither sensibly affected by things nor the creator of things,

Downloaded from https://www.cambridge.org/core. Cornell University Library, on 08 May 2017 at 16:32:16, subject to the Cambridge Core terms of use, available at https://www.cambridge.org/core/terms.
https://doi.org/10.1017/S1369415417000061

then it is unclear how it could cognitively relate to things at all (cf. Corr, 10: 130–1, Leech 2014: 349–50). Consequently, we should not be surprised to see Kant write in *Reflexion* 6048, 'It is difficult to comprehend how another intuitive understanding than the divine should occur' (R 6048, 18: 433 [1783–4]; cf. B71–3, Met-L1/Pölitz, 28: 179, and Th-Pölitz, 28: 1052). Indeed, the closest Kant comes to claiming that a finite being could have intuitive understanding is to speculate that finite beings could have intuitive understanding only if they could (somehow) participate in the Creator's own mind (R 6048, 18: 433 [1783–4], Th-Pölitz, 28: 1052).

Having demonstrated that God's mind is relevant to §§76–7, let us turn to Kant's criticisms of Baumgarten's distinction between God's knowledge of possible and actual things. In the *Danziger Rationaltheologie*, Kant criticizes Baumgarten's distinction as follows:

> If a possible thing is considered in thoroughgoing connection with all other possible things, then one can say that that which is possible in every connection is also actual, in regards to God there is no distinction between a possible and an actual thing, because he cognizes every possible thing in thoroughgoing connection. (Th-Baumbach, 28: 1270)

This passage highlights that God's intuitive understanding cognizes a possible thing in thoroughgoing connection with all others. Additionally, the passage indicates that God's cognition of a thing as thoroughly connected entails that God does not distinguish possible things from actual things. Unfortunately, the passage does not spell out the precise reason for this entailment. However, Kant seems to make the same point in *Reflexion* 5723 (dated to 1785–9). There, Kant notes that we can discuss possibility and actuality either in relation to space and time or in relation to things in themselves. God does not cognize things according to space and time, which are merely the human being's forms of sensibility. But if we consider possibility and actuality in relation to things in themselves, then (Kant tells us) we must discuss possibility in terms of indeterminacy and determinacy. Kant writes, 'the indeterminate is merely possible; in thoroughgoing determination the possible is only what is actual' (R 5723, 18: 335). Of course, God's intuitive understanding cognizes all things in their thoroughgoing determination. As Kant notes, 'The concept of thoroughgoing determination is a relation to omniscience' (R 5723, 18: 335). Because God's intuitive understanding cognizes finite things in their thoroughgoing determination, the only possible things that God

Downloaded from https://www.cambridge.org/core. Cornell University Library, on 08 May 2017 at 16:32:16, subject to the Cambridge Core terms of use, available at https://www.cambridge.org/core/terms.
https://doi.org/10.1017/S1369415417000061

cognizes are actual things. But, unlike God's intuitive understanding, human understanding employs general concepts that omit particular determinations and, thus, represent things in an indeterminate way. Consequently, humans can represent merely possible things.

It is important to recognize that Baumgarten also discusses possibility and actuality in terms of thoroughgoing determination. In the *Metaphysics*, Baumgarten distinguishes between a thing's essence, attributes and modes. A thing's essence is the collection of its essential determinations; attributes are those determinations entailed by a thing's essence. Modes are determinations that neither belong to nor are entailed by a thing's essence but, instead, result from a thing's connection to other things. Baumgarten claims that a thing is possible if and only if its essence is not contradictory. But a thing's essence does not entail its modes and thus (typically) does not thoroughly determine the thing. Instead, a thing's modes are determined by its connections with other things. By cognizing a thing in its connection to all other things, Baumgarten's God cognizes the thing's essence, attributes and modes and, thus, cognizes the thing in its thoroughgoing determination. According to Baumgarten, only a thing's thoroughgoing determination, including the determination of its modes by its connections with other things, entails its actuality. He famously expresses this point by claiming that existence is the complement of essence (Baumgarten 2013, §§54–5). Thus, for Baumgarten, an indeterminate representation of a thing represents the thing as merely possible. But the representation of a thing as thoroughly determined represents the thing as actual. As we can see, the *Danziger Rationaltheologie* and *Reflexion* 5273 seem to endorse this analysis – at least for God's intuitive understanding of things in themselves.

Yet this endorsement might seem confusing for two reasons. First, Kant famously objects to Baumgarten's definitions of actuality and existence, arguing against Baumgarten that the thoroughgoing determination of a thing's concept does not entail the thing's existence. Why, then, does Kant connect thoroughgoing determination and actuality in the case of God's intuitive understanding? Second, although Baumgarten identifies the thoroughly determined with the actual, he does not agree with Kant that 'in thoroughgoing connection the possible is only what is actual' (R 5723, 18: 335). Why, then, does Kant make this claim? I answer these questions in turn.

I suggest that we can explain Kant's connection between actuality and thoroughgoing determination by recalling his view of the divine will.

Downloaded from https://www.cambridge.org/core. Cornell University Library, on 08 May 2017 at 16:32:16, subject to the Cambridge Core terms of use, available at https://www.cambridge.org/core/terms.
https://doi.org/10.1017/S1369415417000061

We have seen that the intuitive understanding of §76 is God's understanding. And although §76 does not explicitly state the point, we have also seen that God creates through his will. Thus God does not merely entertain a thoroughly determinate representation of things. Rather, God's self-consciousness provides God with cognition of the creative ground of actual things – namely, God's will. Consequently, God's representation of a thing in its connection with all other things includes God's accurate representation of the thing's connection with God's actual will. Indeed, the *Religionslehre* criticizes Baumgarten's distinction between God's cognition of possible things and God's cognition of actual things by noting, 'God in the cognition of everything possible is conscious of his free will, which things he made actual from all possible things' (Th-Pölitz, 28:1054). In cognizing an actual thing as thoroughly determined, God cognizes the thing's connection to his own will and, thus, cognizes the thing's actuality. Kant seems to make this same point in *Reflexion* 4023:

> If everything is in *nexu omnimodo* with every determination of the highest cause and thus also with its entire effect of that being [crossed out: only] the entire effect is only a single thing: thus everything that does not actually exist is also not possible *in totum*. (R 4023, 17:388 [1764–9])

Kant does not explicitly mention the divine will in this *Reflexion*. But this *Reflexion* does note that a thing's thoroughgoing connection includes its connection with the highest cause, which is God. Moreover, we have seen that God is the cause of things through his will. For these reasons, the passage implies that God's cognition of an actual thing in its thoroughgoing connection includes God's cognition of his will's actualization of the thing. Previously, we also saw Kant claim that God's intuitive understanding does not abstract. Consequently, God's intuitive understanding does not abstract an actual thing from its connections to other things (including its connection to God's actual will) and, thus, does not represent an actual thing as merely possible.

Kant's argument in the last quoted passage also provides the answer to our second question. The question, recall, is why Kant claims that God's cognition of a thing's thoroughgoing determination entails that only actual things are possible. According to the last quoted passage, 'everything that does not actually exist is also not possible *in totum*' (R 4023, 17: 388). Here Kant notes that no non-actual thing is compatible with the thoroughly determinate world cognized by God's intuitive understanding. Thus no non-actual thing could be part of the actual world.

Downloaded from https://www.cambridge.org/core. Cornell University Library, on 08 May 2017 at 16:32:16, subject to the Cambridge Core terms of use, available at https://www.cambridge.org/core/terms.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S1369415417000061

For this reason, Kant claims that no non-actual thing is possible. This *Reflexion* does not refer to Kant's well-known distinction between logical possibility and real possibility. But given that Kant focuses on God's accurate cognition of the things themselves, his remarks would seem to concern real possibility. Thus the *Reflexion* indicates that, for Kant, a thing is not really possible from the perspective of God's intuitive understanding if its existence is incompatible with God's intuitive cognition of the thoroughly determinate actual world. Because God cognizes the entire world in its thoroughgoing determination, God's intuitive understanding does not recognize any non-actual thing as really possible. As the previously cited *Reflexion* 5723 states, 'in thoroughgoing determination the possible is only what is actual' (R 5273, 18: 335).

There are, however, three potential objections that one might raise against Kant's argument in the above passages. First, one might object that Kant's analysis of possibility in terms of compatibility with the actual world is not fair to Baumgarten. More specifically, one might note that Baumgarten distinguishes between absolute possibility and hypothetical possibility (Baumgarten 2013: §§104–5). A thing is hypothetically possible if possible when considered in relation to other things. But a thing is absolutely possible if possible when considered by itself. Kant's argument seems to attend merely to the hypothetical possibility of things. Even if a thing is not compatible with the actual world and actual divine will, that thing still might be absolutely possible. But, to respond on Kant's behalf, note that absolute possibility considers a thing by itself and, thus, in abstraction from its relations to all other things. But God's intuitive understanding does not abstract. Thus God's intuitive understanding does not represent things in abstraction from their relations to other things. Consequently, God's intuitive understanding does not represent things as absolutely possible in Baumgarten's sense.

Second, even if we accepted Kant's analysis of possibility, we might wonder whether his argument entails that an intuitive understanding would represent no distinction between possible things and actual things. As I have argued, Kant's reasoning relies on the claim that non-actual things are not compatible with God's representation of the thoroughly determinate actual world. But if one thinks that God could have willed differently than God actually does, then one might conclude that God could have created a different world than the actual world. Consequently, one might think that a non-actual world containing non-actual individuals is possible. For this reason, Kant might seem to exaggerate his position when he claims that God's intuitive understanding would

Downloaded from https://www.cambridge.org/core. Cornell University Library, on 08 May 2017 at 16:32:16, subject to the Cambridge Core terms of use, available at https://www.cambridge.org/core/terms.
https://doi.org/10.1017/S1369415417000061

represent no distinction between possible things and actual things. But, to respond on Kant's behalf, note that Kant's rationale for claiming that an intuitive understanding represents no non-actual things as possible applies to the divine will as well. Specifically, a non-actual divine will is not compatible with God's actual will. Thus talk of God possibly willing otherwise abstracts from God's actual will. But we have seen that God's intuitive understanding (by definition) does not abstract. Consequently, God's intuitive understanding does not abstract from God's actual will and, thus, does not represent any non-actual divine wills as possible. Therefore, Kant is committed to the claim that no non-actual things are possible, including no non-actual divine wills.

Third, one might object that Kant's argument fails to uphold §76's claim that an intuitive understanding 'would have no objects except what is actual' (*CJ*, 5: 402). As we have seen, God represents the entirety of his own highest reality, presumably including portions of this highest reality from which no actual finite things derive their reality. If God's representations of these portions of his highest reality were representations of non-actual things, then God's understanding would represent non-actual objects. However, we can reply on Kant's behalf as follows. As noted previously, Kant insists that finite individuals are not limitations of God himself (A579/B607). Thus a finite individual is distinct from the portion of God's highest reality from which the finite individual's own limited reality derives. But if a finite individual is not identical to a portion of God's own reality, then God's representation of a portion of his own reality is not identical to a representation of a finite individual. Instead, God's cognition of finite individuals presumably involves God's cognition of the divine will. In particular, God cognizes that the divine will has created a finite individual whose limited reality corresponds to the divine understanding's representation of a portion of God's highest reality. Thus God does not represent any non-actual individuals, even if God represents portions of his own highest reality to which no finite things correspond.

Having explained Kant's rationale for claiming that God's intuitive understanding would not represent a distinction between possible things and actual things, we can now explain §76's further modal claims that an intuitive understanding would represent things as neither necessary nor contingent. Kant explains this rationale in *Reflexion* 6270:

> In themselves things are neither necessary nor contingent; they [crossed out: are] exist and their non-existence can be united

Downloaded from https://www.cambridge.org/core. Cornell University Library, on 08 May 2017 at 16:32:16, subject to the Cambridge Core terms of use, available at https://www.cambridge.org/core/terms.
https://doi.org/10.1017/S1369415417000061

> with their concept alone; but under the condition of connection with another existence the non-existence of the same is impossible, that is, they can be seen as necessary in a contingent manner and thereby as innerly contingent according to concepts. But in themselves however there occurs no such separation from the conditions, thus neither conditioned nor unconditioned necessity. (R 6270, 18: 539 [1783–4])

Here Kant refers to contingency, conditioned necessity and unconditioned necessity. Although the *Reflexion* is not polished, his argument seems to consist of the following three points:

(1) An actual thing is contingent if it could have not existed. Given its connections to all other things, the non-existence of an actual thing is impossible. Thus assessing a thing's contingency requires that we abstract the thing away from its connections with other things. But, once again, an intuitive understanding does not abstract; thus an intuitive understanding does not represent a thing's existence as contingent.
(2) A thing possesses conditioned necessity if it is contingent in itself but necessary given some other thing. A thing can possess conditioned necessity only if it is contingent in itself. Because an intuitive understanding does not recognize a thing as contingent in itself, it does not recognize it as possessing conditioned necessity either. Put otherwise, the notion of conditioned necessity entails that if the conditions did not obtain, the thing need not exist. But this counterfactual abstracts from the conditions, which an intuitive understanding does not do.
(3) Finally, Kant claims that an intuitive understanding does not represent things as unconditionally necessary.

The third is perhaps the most opaque of Kant's modal claims. However, the quoted *Reflexion* begins by emphasizing that things are not necessary in themselves, because both their existence and non-existence can be combined with their concepts. This suggests that Kant implicitly defines a thing as unconditionally necessary if its concept entails its existence. This interpretation agrees with the first *Critique*'s statement, 'absolute necessity is an existence from mere concepts' (A606–7/B635–6). Indeed, Ian Proops has emphasized that the concept relevant to this definition of absolute necessity is the concept of a thing's essence (Proops 2014: 20). To cognize a thing as unconditionally necessary one would have to cognize the thing's actuality merely from a concept of the thing's essence. But, as I have argued, God's intuitive understanding represents a finite

Downloaded from https://www.cambridge.org/core. Cornell University Library, on 08 May 2017 at 16:32:16, subject to the Cambridge Core terms of use, available at https://www.cambridge.org/core/terms.
https://doi.org/10.1017/S1369415417000061

thing as actual due to God's cognition of his own divine will, rather than merely in virtue of the thing's essence. Thus God does not cognize things as unconditionally necessary. Obviously, one might also ask about God's cognition of his own existence. But God's intuitive understanding represents God's own existence through God's self-consciousness, rather than from a mere concept of his own essence. Thus Kant seems to be committed to the claim that God's intuitive understanding does not cognize God's own existence as unconditionally necessary in the sense defined here. This is surprising, given that Kant often claims that we should *think* (*denken*) of God's existence as absolutely necessary. But we might note on Kant's behalf that to claim that God's intuitive understanding does not represent God's existence as absolutely necessary need not contradict the claim that *discursive* humans may or even should *think* (*denken*) of God as existing necessarily.

For the three reasons just presented, the various modal terms that Kant considers here do not apply to things from the perspective of an intuitive understanding. Of course, from the perspective of human understanding, the denial of a thing's contingency entails the thing's necessity. But Kant denies this entailment from the perspective of an intuitive understanding. For an intuitive understanding, things exist neither necessarily nor contingently but, instead, simply *are*. As Kant says, such things 'would *be* (exist)' (*CJ*, 5: 403). Granted, one would need to say more to defend these modal analyses against all potential objections. But I hope to have illustrated that §76's modal claims are intimately tied to Kant's views regarding thoroughgoing determination and the divine will, rather than to the erroneous claim that an intuitive understanding automatically produces things merely in virtue of thinking of them.

5. Spinozism?

Up to this point, I have explained the arguments behind §76's modal claims. But, as noted previously, many commentators have worried that §76's modal claims push Kant headlong into a form of Spinozism. More specifically, §76's claims that, for God's intuitive understanding, no non-actual things are possible and no actual things are contingent seem to entail a necessitarian metaphysics that leaves room for neither God's freedom nor God's promotion of the highest good. Of course, we should acknowledge that (strictly speaking) §76 does not maintain that all things exist necessarily and, thus, (strictly speaking) is not necessitarianism. Rather, we have seen that God's intuitive understanding represents things neither as contingent nor necessary. But this observation is cold comfort. For even if §76 does not present a necessitarian metaphysics, it also does

Downloaded from https://www.cambridge.org/core. Cornell University Library, on 08 May 2017 at 16:32:16, subject to the Cambridge Core terms of use, available at https://www.cambridge.org/core/terms.
https://doi.org/10.1017/S1369415417000061

not present a metaphysics with contingency, and one might worry that Kant's moral God requires contingency in order to avoid something sufficiently akin to Spinozism.

Unfortunately, Kant does not address this worry directly. But I would defend Kant by making two main points in response to the worry that any denial of contingency amounts to a form of Spinozism inconsistent with Kant's moral God. Before we consider these specific points, remember that, unlike the common interpretation of §76 (according to which God automatically creates things merely in virtue of thinking about them) my interpretation holds that God's will makes a distinct contribution to creation. As I will argue in the two points below, attending to the relationship between God's will and §76's modal claims promises to reconcile §76's modals claims with Kant's moral concept of God. Note, however, that this strategy is not available to the common interpretation of §76. Specifically, this strategy relies on Kant's view that God's will makes a distinct contribution to creation, while the common interpretation of §76 claims that God automatically produces things merely in virtue of thinking about them and, thus, does not take God's will to make a distinct contribution to creation.

First, remember that the main question is whether Kant's theory of God's intuitive understanding (which rejects contingency) conflicts with Kant's moral concept of God. Now, if the fact that God's intuitive understanding does not represent any other divine wills as possible *explained* why the divine will is what it is, then Kant would be committed to a form of Spinozism that would jeopardize his moral concept of God. For there would be no obvious guarantee that the actual (and only possible) divine will grounded on God's intuitive understanding would be a moral will or would will the highest good. But although Kant denies that God's intuitive understanding represents the divine will as contingent, Kant does *not* think that this fact *explains* why the divine will is what it is. Rather, as we have seen, God's intuitive understanding represents no non-actual things (including no non-actual divine wills) as really possible *because* the actual divine will is what it is. More specifically, God's intuitive understanding does not abstract from the actual divine will, and because no non-actual things (including no non-actual divine wills) are compatible with the actual divine will, God's intuitive understanding does not represent any non-actual things (including any non-actual divine wills) as possible. Thus one cannot use the fact that God's intuitive understanding represents no non-actual divine wills as possible to explain why the divine will is what it is. Consequently, the intuitive character of

Downloaded from https://www.cambridge.org/core. Cornell University Library, on 08 May 2017 at 16:32:16, subject to the Cambridge Core terms of use, available at https://www.cambridge.org/core/terms.
https://doi.org/10.1017/S1369415417000061

God's understanding does not explain why the divine will is what it is. Thus the intuitive character of God's understanding does not pose a problem for Kant's attribution of a moral will to God.

Second, it is important to stress that Kant's moral concept of God never maintains that divine freedom requires contingency. Rather, Kant dismisses such claims. In the *Religionslehre*, we read:

> One might raise the objection that God cannot decide otherwise than he does, and so he does not act freely but from the necessity of his nature. The human being, however, can always decide something else, e.g., a human being, instead of being benevolent in this case, could also not be that. But it is precisely this which is a lack of freedom in the human being, since he does *not always* act according to his reason; but in God it is not due to the necessity of his nature that he can decide only as he does but rather it is true freedom in God that he decides only what is in conformity with his highest understanding. (Th-Pölitz, 28: 1068)

Here Kant denies that contingency is required for divine freedom. He maintains that the divine will is free so long as it possesses transcendental freedom (that is, acts spontaneously rather than being determined by something else) and possesses practical freedom (that is, acts independently of sensuous impulses): 'To God pertains transcendental freedom, which consists in an absolute spontaneity, as well as practical freedom, or the independence of his will from any sensuous impulses' (Th-Pölitz, 28: 1067). The question, remember, is whether §76's modal claims are consistent with Kant's presentation elsewhere of his moral concept of God. But nothing that we have said about §76's modal claims indicates that God's will is determined by something else, rather than arising spontaneously. Thus nothing in §76 contradicts God's transcendental freedom. And nothing in §76 indicates that the divine will is determined by sensible impulses or does not operate according to the moral law. Moreover, as we have seen above, §76's claims about God's intuitive understanding do not explain why the divine will is what it is. Thus §76's modal claims do not threaten God's ability to operate according to the moral law and do not threaten the moral concept of God presented elsewhere in Kant's writings.

6. Conclusion

I have argued that Kant's remarks about modality in §76 are rooted in his dissatisfaction with Baumgarten's rational theology. Specifically, Kant's

Downloaded from https://www.cambridge.org/core. Cornell University Library, on 08 May 2017 at 16:32:16, subject to the Cambridge Core terms of use, available at https://www.cambridge.org/core/terms.
https://doi.org/10.1017/S1369415417000061

criticisms of Baumgarten are tied to his claim that God's intuitive understanding cognizes things in their thoroughgoing determination and to his view of the divine will's role in creation. Finally, I have argued that §76's modal claims are consistent with Kant's moral concept of God. However, this reconciliation is not available to the common interpretation of §76 that takes God to create things merely in virtue of thinking about them, rather than through the divine will's distinct contribution. Of course, 'Spinozism' is an imprecise term, and perhaps Spinozists come on a spectrum. Kant's claim that an intuitive understanding does not represent things as contingent might continue to strike some people as closer to some form of Spinozism than do philosophical positions that embrace God's cognition of contingency. Nevertheless, we have seen that §76's modal claims do not undermine Kant's own moral concept of God.[23]

Notes

1 I provide author-date citations for all authors except Kant. Kant's works are cited according to Kant (1900ff.) except for the *Critique of Pure Reason*, which is cited according to the standard A/B pagination. I have used the translations in Kant (1992ff.) when possible. All other translations from Kant are my own. I employ the following abbreviations: Corr = Correspondence, CPrR = *Critique of Practical Reason*, *CJ* = *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, ID = Of the Form and Principles of the Sensible and the Intelligible World (Inaugural Dissertation), *P* = *Prolegomena to Any Future Metaphysics*, R = *Reflexion*, Met-L1/Pölitz = *Metaphysics L1,* Th-Baumbach = *Danziger Rationaltheologie*, Th-Pölitz = Lectures on the Philosophical Doctrine of Religion (*Religionslehre*)

2 E.g. Leech 2014: 346–7; Lord 2011: 98; Zammito 1992: 257.

3 E.g. Lord 2011: 98 and Zammito 1992: 251–9. One might worry that §76's modal claims threaten human freedom; however, Kant's theory of human freedom is too large a topic to treat here. Some commentators have argued that other components of Kant's philosophy entail further Spinozistic tenets, such as monism (Boehm 2014: ch. 1). Because my focus is on §76's modal claims, I will not address such arguments.

4 E.g. B145; ID, 2: 397; *P*, 4: 355–6; Corr, 10: 130; R 4348, 17: 515 [1770–8]; R 4270, 17: 489 [1769–76]; R 6041, 18: 431 [1783–4]; R 6048, 18: 433 [1783–4]; Th-Baumbach, 28: 1267; Th-Pölitz, 28: 1053. Kant denies that we can know (*wissen*) whether God exists. But if God exists, then (according to Kant) God's understanding is intuitive.

5 See A804ff./B832ff., *CPrR*, 5: 124ff. and *CJ*, 5: 442ff. for the three *Critiques*' statements of morally justified belief in God.

6 Düsing (1968) and Förster (2011: 155ff.) also discuss historical sources for Kant's concept of intuitive understanding. Düsing argues that Kant's concept stems from the Christian Platonic tradition, while Förster specifies Leibniz's *Theodicy*. My focus on Kant's engagement with Baumgarten need not exclude such further influences.

7 Förster (2011) and McLaughlin (2014) also argue that Kant primarily describes intuitive understanding as cognition of a whole. But neither anticipates my interpretation of §76's modal claims. McLaughlin denies that the intuitive understanding of §§76–7 is divine; I argue against such denials in section 4. Förster draws a sharp distinction between intellectual intuition and intuitive understanding and claims that the modal claims at *CJ*, 5: 402–3, regard a creative intellectual intuition, rather than intuitive understanding. Thus,

Downloaded from https://www.cambridge.org/core. Cornell University Library, on 08 May 2017 at 16:32:16, subject to the Cambridge Core terms of use, available at https://www.cambridge.org/core/terms.
https://doi.org/10.1017/S1369415417000061

Förster's interpretation of the modal claims at *CJ*, 5: 402–3, agrees with the traditional interpretation represented by Leech, Lord and Zammito. For criticisms of Förster's distinction between intellectual intuition and intuitive understanding, see Leech 2014: 354–6.

8 Pimpinella (2001) and Schwaiger (2001) emphasize this influence.

9 I have altered the translations from Leibniz (1989) to translate *cognitio* as 'cognition'.

10 Pimpinella (2001: 273–4) and Schwaiger (2001: 180) stress this point.

11 Schwaiger (2001: 180–1) notes this difference.

12 Surprisingly, Wolff continues by noting that God possesses 'also at the same time a figurative cognition of all things' (Wolff 1983: §963). But Wolff's internal citations refer to a paragraph regarding God's knowledge of people's souls. Thus Wolff simply means that God knows all the signs that people employ.

13 Schwaiger (2001: 1182) emphasizes this difference.

14 However, we should note some nuances of Leech's interpretation: Leech primarily characterizes an intuitive understanding as an understanding for which the capacities of thought and intuition collapse into one (Leech 2014: 345). But, for her, this characterization entails that an intuitive understanding would automatically produce a non-existent object merely by thinking about it. At the same time, she also suggests that if an object already existed, then an intuitive understanding might not need to create the object to guarantee the object's availability (Leech 2014: 347).

15 One might wonder whether the doctrine of divine simplicity, which maintains that God's cognition and will are identical, would entail that God creates whatever God thinks about. But Kant, who says little about divine simplicity, makes no such argument.

16 E.g. R 5535, 18: 211 [1772–8]; R 6071, 18: 442 [1785–8]; Th-Baumbach, 28: 1278ff.; Th-Pölitz, 28: 1092–3.

17 The lectures on rational theology quoted in this essay all stem from 1783–4 (Kreimendahl 1988).

18 Leech (2014: 355) notes that an intuitive understanding cognizes the whole but argues that §76's modal claims result, instead, from the fact that an intuitive understanding guarantees the existence of its object. However, we will see that God's cognition of the whole is central to §76's modal claims.

19 Kohl (2015: 101), Leech (2014: 345) and McLaughlin (2014: 159) recognize this point.

20 God's lack of concepts seems to entail that God does not employ the categories. Yet possibility and necessity are categories. This might seem to entail that God cognizes things neither as merely possible nor as necessary. However, I agree with Leech (2014: 356) that §76 does not seem to make this argument. Additionally, this argument would entail that God does not cognize things as actual, because actuality is a category. Yet Kant's God does cognize things as actual. The relationship between intuitive understanding and the categories deserves further treatment but is too large a topic to handle here; for discussion see Kohl (2015).

21 Kant uses the term 'derivation' (*Ableitung*) here (A579/B607).

22 See note 7.

23 I would like to thank Uygar Abaci, Bryan Hall, and the journal's referees as well as audiences at the Van Leer Institute, La Salle University and Oxford. I would also like to acknowledge the support of a Fordham Faculty Fellowship and a Volkswagen Stiftung/Mellon Postdoctoral Fellowship in the Humanities.

References

Baumgarten, A.G. (2013) *Metaphysics: A Critical Translation with Kant's Elucidations, Selected Notes, and Related Materials*. Ed. Courtney D. Fugate and John Hymers. London: Bloomsbury.

Downloaded from https://www.cambridge.org/core. Cornell University Library, on 08 May 2017 at 16:32:16, subject to the Cambridge Core terms of use, available at https://www.cambridge.org/core/terms.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S1369415417000061

Boehm, Omri (2014) *Kant's Critique of Spinoza*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
Düsing, Klaus (1968) *Die Teleologie in Kants Weltbegriff*. Bonn: H. Bouvier.
Förster, Eckart (2011) *Die 25 Jahre der Philosophie*. Frankfurt am Main: Klostermann.
Kant, Immanuel (1900ff.) *Gesammelte Schriften*. Ed. Preußische Akademie der Wissenschaften, Deutsche Akademie der Wissenschaften zu Berlin, and Akademie der Wissenschaften zu Göttingen. Berlin: de Gruyter.
—— (1992ff.) *The Cambridge Edition of the Works of Immanuel Kant*. Ed. Paul Guyer and Allen W. Wood. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
Kohl, Markus (2015) 'Kant on the Inapplicability of the Categories to Things in Themselves'. *British Journal for the History of Philosophy*, 23, 90–114.
Kreimendahl, Lothar (1988) 'Kants Kolleg über Rationaltheologie. Fragmente einer bislang unbekannten Vorlesungsnachschrift'. *Kant-Studien*, 79, 318–28.
Leech, Jessica (2014) 'Making Modal Distinctions: Kant on the Possible, the Actual, and the Intuitive Understanding'. *Kantian Review*, 19, 339–65.
Leibniz, G.W. (1989) *Philosophical Essays*. Ed. Roger Ariew and Daniel Garber. Indianapolis: Hackett.
—— (1999) *Sämtliche Schriften und Briefe,* vol. 4, part A. Ed. Leibniz-Forschungstelle der Universität Münster. Berlin: Akademie Verlag.
Lord, Beth (2011) *Kant and Spinozism: Transcendental Idealism and Immanence from Jacobi to Deleuze*. Houndmills: Palgrave Macmillan.
McLaughlin, Peter (2014) 'Mechanical Explanation in the "Critique of the Teleological Power of Judgment"'. In Ina Goy and Eric Watkins (eds), *Kant's Theory of Biology* (Berlin: de Gruyter), pp. 149–66.
Meier, G. F. (1755–9) *Metaphysik*. Halle: J. J. Gebauer.
Proops, Ian (2014) 'Kant on the Cosmological Argument'. *Philosopher's Imprint*, 14, 1–21.
Pimpinella, Pietro (2001) ' "*Cognitio intuitiva*" bei Wolff und Baumgarten'. In Michael Oberhausen *et al*. (eds), *Vernunftkritik und Aufklärung. Studien zur Philosophie Kants und seines Jahrhunderts* (Stuttgart-Bad Cannstatt: Frommann-Holzboog), pp. 265–94.
Schwaiger, Clemens (2001) 'Symbolische und intuitive Erkenntnis bei Leibniz, Wolff und Baumgarten'. In Hans Poser *et al*. (eds), *VII. Internationaler Leibniz Kongress Berlin, 10.–14. September 2001. Nihil sine ratione. Mensch, Natur und Technik im Wirken von G.W. Leibniz. Vorträge 3. Teil* (Hanover: Gottfried-Wilhelm-Leibniz-Gesellschaft), pp. 1178–84.
Wolff, Christian (1983) *Vernünfftigen Gedancken von Gott, der Welt und der Seele des Menschen, auch allen Dingen überhaupt*. Ed. Charles A. Corr. Hildesheim: Olms.
Zammito, John H. (1992) *The Genesis of Kant's Critique of Judgment*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Downloaded from https://www.cambridge.org/core. Cornell University Library, on 08 May 2017 at 16:32:16, subject to the Cambridge Core terms of use, available at https://www.cambridge.org/core/terms.
https://doi.org/10.1017/S1369415417000061